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General debate on national experience in population matters: realizing the future we want — integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda

Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Introduction

At the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA), agreed in Cairo in 1994, the United Nations Member States defined 'reproductive rights' by shifting the population paradigm from numbers to people-centred, rights-based approaches. In doing so, the ICPD transformed the global understanding of the role of population and its interaction with sustained economic growth and sustainable development. In the 20 years since the introduction of the ICPD PoA, much progress has been made in providing fundamental sexual and reproductive and health and rights services for women and men around the world. The ICPD, its +5, +10 and +15 reviews and the ICPD beyond 2014 review process have clearly defined the rights, services and programmes that every individual should have; these must be reflected in the post-2015 agenda. Member States have recognised the importance of this revolutionary global agreement; now is the time to ensure its support for human rights-based sustainable development through the post-2015 framework.

Recommendations

The post-2015 framework presents an opportunity for the global community to make international commitments a reality. We recommend that regional and global commitment to include ICPD and its broader population and development agenda into the post-2015 negotiations is reflected in the outcome document of the forty-eighth session of the Commission on Population and Development, including through a specific recommendation that it should be considered a mandatory input into the post-2015 negotiation process.

We ask governments, during the forty-eighth session of the Commission to prioritise sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), using the commitments from the ICPD regional reviews as a minimum SRHR position. We recommend that:

(a) The outcome of the ICPD beyond 2014 process including the outcomes of the regional conferences are integrated into the post-2015 negotiation process, alongside the Open Working Group proposal and the Secretary General's Synthesis report.

(b) Sexual and reproductive health and rights are recognised as central to human rights-based sustainable development, with specific targets on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive rights being included both under goals on gender and health in the post-2015 framework. Including sexual and reproductive health and rights under a standalone goal on gender would ensure that the aspects of structural norms and gender inequality that influence the realisation of these rights are addressed. Inclusion under the health goal would ensure the prioritisation of sexual and reproductive health services in the context of the right to health.

(c) Additionally, an integrated approach should be adopted, with other sexual and reproductive health and rights targets and indicators included throughout the new development framework, including in access to adequate hygiene services in schools and ensuring universal civil registration and vital statistics including birth, death and marriage.

(d) There is a commitment to promoting good governance, accountability and sufficient resourcing of sexual and reproductive health.

(e) There is a commitment to ensuring youth participation in the development and implementation of the post-2015 development framework.

(f) All data in the post-2015 development framework is disaggregated by age, gender, economic quintile, geographic location, ethnicity and other relevant attributes.

Building on ICPD into the Post-2015 agenda

Since its inception in 1994, the ICPD PoA has evolved and grown to reflect the shifts and changes in the social and political landscape. Key elements of sexual and reproductive health and rights that have gained Member State support after 1994 include comprehensive sexuality education (CPD 2009 and 2012), training and equipping health providers to provide safe abortion services in circumstances where abortion is not against the law (ICPD+5), and marital rape and honour killings as forms of violence (Beijing +5). Building on this strong basis, and recognising the need to ensure that the human rights landscape evolves, the ICPD beyond 2014 review process enabled governments, civil society organisations and service providers to reflect on and recommit to the ICPD PoA.

Each of the regional reviews has advanced the global agenda and these should serve as the bottom line for each of the regions in their post-2015 negotiation position. Member States from every region affirmed the importance of expanding the agenda and drew attention to the importance of:

(a) Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (in the Western Asia region they called for universal access to sexual and reproductive health) including the elimination of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

(b) Adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health services, including comprehensive sexuality education.

(c) Universal access to contraceptive information, services and supplies, and access to safe and legal abortion services without restriction.

(d) Elimination of violence against women and girls and all discrimination based on gender.

(e) Universal access to HIV services: access to integrated services, treatment and care.

(f) Planning population dynamics for growth and development.

At a regional level, some of the more specific areas of Member State agreement included:

(a) The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the League of Arab States: Cairo Declaration on "Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World" had a special focus on adolescent reproductive health. It calls for the elimination of female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage and gender based violence.

(b) The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe: "Enabling Choices: Population priorities for the 21st Century" calls for restrictions within existing abortion laws to be removed, to safeguard the lives of women and adolescent girls.

(c) United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: "Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development" provided the first inter-governmentally agreed definition of sexual rights and strong agreements on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and eradicating discrimination and violence on this basis. It also recognized that 'some experiences in the region have demonstrated that the penalization of abortion leads to higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity and does not reduce the number of abortions.'

(d) United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific: "Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and Development" recognizes that 'sexual and reproductive rights' embrace certain human rights. It calls for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programmes and the removal of legal and social barriers to accessing youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. For the first time governments adopted language on intimate partner violence.

(e) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and African Union: "Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014" committed to protect the dignity and rights of women and girls by eradicating all harmful practices, including early and/or forced marriages and female genital mutilation/cutting. It also called for universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, with particular attention to the needs of adolescents and youth; the integration of sexual and reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS services with family planning.

This support for the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of its review conferences and its essential role in achieving sustainable development and ending extreme poverty by 2030 was further reflected at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development, which reaffirmed Member States' commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, recognized the documents from the regional conferences on population and development, and linked ICPD beyond 2014 to the post-2015 development agenda. It specifically stressed "the importance of protecting the achievements of the International Conference on Population and Development, responding to new challenges relevant to population and development and to the changing development environment, and reinforcing the integration of the population and development agenda in global processes related to development, including in the process related to the post-2015 development agenda". This support was also seen at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the ICPD in September 2014, where Member States spoke consistently in support of the ICPD PoA and the positive influence that it has had at national level in improving individuals' lives through access to sexual and reproductive health services. Member States spoke of the importance and their commitment to the ICPD PoA beyond 2014, and for this to be truly realized we must ensure the PoA lives on in the new post-2015 development framework.